

HERACLIUS

ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ*

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For George F. Hourani

IN the year 629 the Emperor Heraclius formally assumed the title *basileus*, βασιλεύς, which no emperor before had been willing or able to do. The emperors had followed local usage when they assumed the title *basileus* informally, but in 629 Heraclius initiated a new phase in this process, that of the formal assumption of the title in official communications. The other imperial titles, lapsed for the remaining part of the reign, although they did appear, fitfully, late in the century and later still in the millennium. Before the new title, *basileus*, there appeared a descriptive phrase, πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ, the full but impressively short titular formula reading πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεύς. The new formula marked a significant change in the most prominent facet of the image of Byzantium at home and abroad. It was a break with more than six centuries of legal and constitutional fictions which had masked the true nature of the imperial dignity, namely, its autocratic character as a *dominatus*; and it signified the restoration to Roman constitutional history of the title *rex* in its Greek form, *basileus*, after an exile which had lasted over a millennium, at the same time introducing into the political terminology of the eastern half of the Mediterranean basin a new term which was to have a fateful history, extending through some eight centuries up to the fall of Constantinople."¹

* I should like to express my thanks to the two scholars who read the typescript of this article and offered valuable suggestions: Robert Browning and C. H. Roberts.

¹ I. Shahīd, "The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius," *DOP*, 26 (1972), 295–96. Πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεύς appears for the first time in the *inscriptio* of a Novella of the year 629, dated March 21. In that Novella the new titular formula appears in the plural, since Heraclius' son is associated with him; see Zepos, *Jus*, I, 36.

The *Heraclias* of George of Pisidia contains a passage which may turn out to be of crucial importance to the formal assumption of the *basileia* in 629. Because of the obscurity in which the poet wrapped his thought, it has been variously interpreted by historians and philologists. It is therefore imperative to subject it to an intensive analysis. The passage may be found in Pertusi's edition of George of Pisidia:²

ὦ Σκηπίων, σίγησον· ἐγράφη νόμος
τοὺς Σκηπίωνας Ἡρακλείωνας λέγειν.
κοινὸν τὸ δόγμα· νῦν ἀκινδύνως μόνον
ἔξεστι δούλοις νομοθετεῖν πρὸς δεσπότης.
κύρωσον, ὦ κράτιστε, τὸν νόμον τύπω·³

Among historians, J. B. Bury was possibly the first to note this passage, take it out of its literary context, and make it significant to the historian of Late Antiquity. As early as 1889, in his *History of the Later Roman Empire*, II, 244–45, he wrote: "A resolution, which was to become law with the Emperor's consent, was initiated by the Byzantines on this auspicious occasion, that Heraclius should be surnamed *Scipio* and his successors *Scipiones*. The great heroes of the Republic of Old Rome were not yet forgotten by the new Romans of the Bosphorus, and it was recognised that the Emperor who beat back the Asiatic power of the Sassanids was a historical successor of the emperor who overthrew the Asiatic commonwealth of Carthage." This interpretation of the passage has been echoed since then; in describing the return

² *Georgio di Pisidia, Poemi*, I: *Panegirici epici*, ed. and trans. A. Pertusi, StPB, 7 (Ettal, 1959) (hereafter Pertusi, *Poemi*). In its entirety, the passage in question runs from p. 244, line 97 to p. 245, line 109; its important part, however, consists of the five lines quoted here, which may be found on p. 244, lines 97–101.

³ The passage may be translated as follows: "O Scipio, be silent; a law was introduced that the Scipios be called Heracliuses. The decree was unanimously carried [or was a joint one]; only now is it safe for subjects to legislate in behalf of their masters. Validate, O sovereign, the law with an edict."

of Heraclius to Constantinople in 629, Moss writes of "the triumph of the Roman Emperor, whom his people saluted by the name of Scipio...."⁴

This interpretation is, of course, basically that of Joseph Maria Querci, the first editor of Pisides whose commentary accompanies the text of the *Heraclias* established by J. Bekker for the Bonn Corpus and republished in *Patrologia Graeca* (vol. 92, cols. 1306–7). But Bury provided the verses of the poet with a historical dimension spanning more than eight centuries, linking Heraclius with the great hero of Republican times. In spite of its attractiveness, this interpretation has to be rejected on the most basic level—the linguistic one; the definite article τοὺς precedes Σκηπίωνας, not Ἡρακλείωνας, and the correct translation of the line should be exactly the contrary of what Bury gives in the above-quoted passage; it should read "that the Scipios should be called Heracliuses," not vice versa. However, it is impossible to believe that Bury could have missed the position of the article. He was probably puzzled by it and must have concluded, as Querci before him must have done, that a law which was introduced not in Rome but in Constantinople, and which makes Scipio, not Heraclius, the beneficiary, simply does not make sense; consequently, he accepted an interpretation which does make sense, and to which he was already predisposed by his own unitarian view of the continuity of Roman history, thus allowing his historical conceptions to unduly influence his exegetical effort. Bury's views are open to two more objections: 1. as has been pointed out by Th. Nissen (*infra*, note 6), the comparisons with figures taken from classical antiquity in the *Heraclias* are made in conformity with the requirements of the rhetorical device of αὐξησις, *amplificatio*, according to which a figure is invoked for comparison only to be shown inferior to Heraclius, as was Alexander himself (lines 110–21). But the comparison of Heraclius and Scipio does not at all illustrate the principle of *amplificatio*. In fact, according to Bury's inter-

pretation, it illustrates exactly the contrary, as it implies that Scipio is the greater of the two. 2. Heraclius was the first Crusader, a mystic figure who has just won a holy war with the help of sacred relics, all of which makes it difficult to believe that at the conclusion of his *mystike theoria* he would have been identified with a pagan Roman born long before Jesus Christ. Such a view, which brings Scipio and Heraclius together, does not take into account the spiritual atmosphere which prevailed at the time in Byzantium, and especially in Constantinople itself, which was saved in 626 by the miraculous image of the Holy Virgin. Nor does it take into account the author himself, George of Pisidia, a presbyter of St. Sophia, who would have been the last to invoke the image of Scipio and associate it with his hero, his Christian knight-errant. It is true that the law was not introduced by the poet, who is only reporting on what the people or other bodies had proposed. But the poet is not detached in reporting the legislative act; he is engaged. He enthusiastically endorses it and calls upon Heraclius to validate it with an edict (line 101), since if he does not, his wounds and achievements will (lines 102–9). These views on George of Pisidia are not being advanced *a priori*; his work abounds with evidence which validates this point. For example, the *Hexameron*, a Christian poem on the six days of the Creation, tries to refute the illustrious figures of pagan antiquity, Plato, Aristotle, and Proclus, among others; and in the *Heraclias*, when classical pagan figures are compared with Heraclius, it is only to demonstrate their inferiority to his hero.⁵

Equally important is the interpretation of Th. Nissen, the philologist who made a special study of the work of Pisides in his article, "Historisches Epos und Panegyrikos in der Spätantike."⁶ The most relevant part of this study is on pp. 303–4, where he argues—and he was the first to do so—that the law referred to by Pisides is not a law at all, but a rhetorical figure which has parallels in the work of earlier literary artists. Of the law he writes: "Das ist weiter nichts als ein auffällig angestrichener Schlauch für den abgestandenen Wein dieser Synkrisis, die sich bei Claudian...findet," a judgment which has not failed to influence the editor and translator of Pisides.

⁵ Pertusi, *Poemi*, 243, 245–46.

⁶ *Hermes*, 75 (1940), 298–353.

⁴ See H. St. L. N. Moss, *The Birth of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1961), 141. Bury evidently understood Ἡρακλείωνας to be the patronymic formed with the suffix -ίων, which morphologically it can be; but this requires for purposes of balance the employment of the patronymic of Σκηπίωνας, another objection to Bury's interpretation on the purely morphological level.

Nissen's views on this difficult passage in Pisides are radical, and for this reason they deserve a thorough examination.

By implication, he rightly rejects Querci's view that the law mentioned by the poet concerns a golden statue for Heraclius with an inscription calling the Heraclionae the *novi Scipiadae*. This is pure guesswork on the part of Querci. It unjustifiably introduces extraneous elements into the interpretation of the text. Nissen was right in rejecting it implicitly, as Pertusi has done explicitly.⁷

But there can be no doubt whatsoever that what is involved in the passage is a real law and not a rhetorical figure, as Nissen chooses to argue. This is perfectly clear from the language of the text, which refers to the law more than once, in lines 97, 101, 107, and employs the various technical terms used in lawmaking and not the general, vague terms which rhetoricians resort to; examples of these terms are ἐγράφη νόμος (line 97), τὸ δόγμα (line 99), νομοθετεῖν (line 100), and κύρωσον τύπῳ (line 101). It is possible that τὸ δόγμα in line 99 means "opinion," not "decree" or "resolution," but this is unlikely. Pisides consistently uses legal terminology throughout the five lines of this passage; it would be lexically incongruous, even dissonant, if he abandoned the technical level to employ τὸ δόγμα in a nontechnical sense, especially as he is describing the three stages in lawmaking, i.e., introducing the law, passing it, and validating it. The first and third phases are clearly expressed, and what is more, the third phase—validating it—entails the second—passing it—all of which leads to the inevitable conclusion that τὸ δόγμα is used with technical accuracy in the sense of a "decree" or "resolution," and so it is translated by Pertusi as well as by his predecessors.⁸ This is a rather important point since it makes clear that the law was actually passed; it needed only the emperor's *typos*.

⁷ See Pertusi's commentary on this passage, *Poemi*, 266.

⁸ This is confirmed by the use of κοινόν. In such a context it is a technical term indicating a *joint* resolution, and is so used by the sixth-century author, John Lydus, when quoting Gaius, the third-century Roman jurist: δόγματι κοινῶ τῆς βουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου; see John Lydus, *De Magistratibus*, ed. R. Wünsch, Teubner (1903), 34, lines 18–19. As to what bodies were involved in the resolution, see *infra*, p. 236.

Nissen bases his conclusion that no law is involved on the fact that Scipio has figured frequently in the work of rhetoricians and that this was just another instance. That Scipio has figured in the work of rhetoricians is a fact, but the fact does not yield the conclusion which Nissen draws. Since his *non sequitur* is a serious one, it is necessary to examine the "evidence" he adduces.

Claudian, whom he cites in the body of the text (p. 304) rather than relegates to a footnote, as he does with Symmachus and Themistius (p. 304 note 1), does make a *syncrisis* involving Stilicho and Scipio, but it is perfectly clear from the language of the fourth-century writer that it is a rhetorical figure and nothing else. By analogy Nissen argues that the same is true of the passage in Pisides. However, the analogy is demonstrably false, since the idioms of the two writers are entirely different: that of Claudian is rhetorical while that of Pisides is not—it is plainly that of constitutional practice and lawmaking. Nissen fails to invoke any parallel in Claudian or in Pisides which could explain away the reference to the "law" as merely rhetorical. Without some such parallel the "law" cannot be decreed out of existence by false analogy.

In spite of the conclusion which he categorically affirms, Nissen betrays a certain uneasiness about the *syncrisis*, Heraclius-Scipio, on which he based his conclusion. Of the *syncrisis*, Heraclius-Alexander, which immediately follows, he speaks approvingly: not far-fetched but rather well-chosen, "nicht gesucht aber gewählt." Since this is contrasted with the preceding *syncrisis*, Heraclius-Scipio, it may be inferred that Nissen was not quite happy about interpreting the difficult line in the passage, line 98, as a *syncrisis* involving Scipio; but instead of looking more closely into the state of the text for a possible alternative solution, he chose to solve the problem by shelving it and explained the "law" only by explaining it away.

This drastic measure of excising the "law" from the body of the *Heraclias* is a counsel of despair, more serious than Bury's attempt to reverse the positions of the two beneficiaries of the "law." Both attempts are unsatisfactory inasmuch as they do violence to the text, which, as will be argued later in this article, admits of a rehandling, by relating it to the events of the

year 629, a course which Pertusi was almost led into. The two entirely different conclusions, exclusive of one another, should surely counsel a return to the seemingly insoluble *crux* Σκηπίωνος, which occurs in an otherwise perfectly clear text, to determine whether what is involved is Scipio the conqueror of Carthage, or something else. Before revisiting the text, a close examination of the *Heraclias* as a whole is desirable to find out whether or not Pisides has a place in it for Scipio.

With the exception of this passage under discussion, there is not in the whole of the *Heraclias* a single reference to a Roman figure. All the references, apart from those pertaining to the Persians, are biblical and Greek. This is an aspect which has not been noticed by Nissen, who cites references in Claudian, Themistius, and Symmachus (p. 304 note 1) to Scipio. But there is a basic difference between Pisides on the one hand and these three writers on the other. These are all fourth-century figures, two of whom, Symmachus and Claudian, were living in the West, in Italy, where recollection of Scipio was still fresh; but more important is the fact that all three of them were pagans, devotees of the religion of Rome, who were anxious to evoke memories of the distant and pagan Roman past in which Scipio Africanus cut a large figure. This is especially true of Claudian, who, after all, was writing a panegyric on Stilicho, and Stilicho was the savior of the Empire in the West, who performed a service for Italy analogous to that of Scipio when he defeated both Alaric in 403 and Radagaisus in 405.

But the passage in the *Heraclias* is of the seventh, not the fourth, century, and was composed in the Eastern, not the Western, half of the Empire, where memories of Scipio would have been understandably greener. Moreover, its author is a deacon of St. Sophia, and his hero is Heraclius, the first Crusader.

If Scipio had been in the mind of Pisides, he would have been given a place in the second canto of the *Heraclias* where the poet enumerates the achievements of Heraclius and divides them into five groups; of these, the last three deal with his military achievements against the enemy—Avars, Slavs, and Persians—and the natural place for Scipio would have been in one of these parts where Heraclius prepares for the counterattack and studies tactics. There was certainly something Scipionic about the Hera-

clian counteroffensive, and Scipio had been studied by Philippicus, who had conducted the war against the Persians during the reign of Maurice; while planning the strategy of his campaign in Arzanene, he is said to have examined the strategic conceptions of Scipio Africanus.⁹ Instead of making a *syncrisis* with Scipio at the most natural juncture, Pisides goes back to biblical times and invokes the figure of Elias: *Heraclias* II, 133–43. The choice of a prophet rather than a soldier in a military context is extremely revelatory. Pisides, with all his immersion in the work of his literary models, was a discriminating author who was writing not as a mere rhetorician, but as a propagandist for the reign and for the emperor of whom he was anxious to promote a certain image.

An examination of the immediate context wherein the passage occurs leads to the same conclusion as the examination of the larger context of the whole of *Heraclias*. The *syncriseis* are made with Hercules, Noah, Alexander, and Timotheos. The first is a hero from Greek mythology, the second is a biblical patriarch; the point of their inclusion in the *syncrisis* is their labors and, what is more important, the fact that one of them opened a new era in the history of the world, as Heraclius has done. Heraclius is referred to as κοσμορύστης (*Heraclias* I, 70), and as Noah,¹⁰ ὁ Νῶε τῆς νέας οἰκουμένης (*Heraclias* I, 84). These two figures represent the first half of the series of four *syncriseis*, and they are not military commanders. The two following figures, Alexander and Timotheos, are, of course, military figures, and it might be said that Scipio could have been included in their company. Against such a view argue the following considerations:

1. Just as Hercules and Noah are closely related as a pair, so are the two generals, Alexander and Timotheos; they complement each other in the following manner: both belonged to the world of the Greeks, not the Romans; they lived in the same century; one was a field commander, the other an admiral, and so Heraclius is presented as superior to the two combined; both conducted their military

⁹ See Theophylactus Simocatta, *Historiae*, Teubner (1972), Lib. I, 14, 2ff.

¹⁰ Although the one apostrophized is Heraclius himself; see *infra*, note 16.

operations in the same area as Heraclius; and both were the subject of literary and visual art.

2. Pisides is interested in their military achievements, and this was natural for a court poet who was writing an epinician poem on a victorious autokrator. But he is equally interested in the moral and nonmilitary *arete* of these figures, as he tries to show that Heraclius is superior to both of them in this respect; Alexander inherited his army from his father, while Heraclius had to fashion his own instrument of victory; Timotheos had Tyche smiling on him all the time, while Heraclius experienced Tyche's malicious and perverse intervention in his affairs. That Pisides is interested in Alexander the man and not only the soldier is, of course, reflected in the fact that his Alexander is not Arrian's but Plutarch's, the author of the *Moralia* who wrote his *Parallel Lives* as a moralist rather than as a historian. The poet, engaged in the process of comparison with Alexander, extolls Heraclius' φρόνημα as much as he extolls his κράτος (line 128).

The foregoing observations on the nature of the series of *syncriseis* lead to the conclusion that there is really no place for a reference to Scipio in such a context—one which is so carefully structured, where the choice of the *syncriseis* betrays a certain design, numerical and other, where the *two* figures of Hercules and Noah balance the other *two* figures of Alexander and Timotheos, and where each member of the two pairs complements or relates to the other member in a meaningful manner.

More important for the "irrelevance of Scipio" is the fact that this supposed reference to Scipio interrupts the *syncrisis* with Alexander, which starts with a reference to Apelles in lines 93–96 and returns to Alexander in lines 110–21, following the supposed comparison with Scipio. Such an interruption is startling and unaccountable, and strongly suggests that what is involved in the passage is not primarily Scipio. This is fortified by the realization that the Alexander Pisides brings in for a *syncrisis* is that of Plutarch. He says so, and calls on that author to stop making parallels. Now this raises an important objection: the parallel *Life* to that of Alexander in the work of Plutarch is not Scipio's, which is paired with that of Epaminondas, but that of Julius Caesar. This is rather a serious problem for Nissen. If Pisides wanted to choose a Roman figure for a *syncrisis*,

the obvious one should have been Caesar, not Scipio. As will be discussed later in this article¹¹ there are implied references to Caesar in this part of the *Heraclias*, because it is Caesar not Scipio who is more relevant to the purpose of the poet, and not only because he is paired with Alexander in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.

The preceding arguments have cast enough doubts upon the supposed reference to Scipio in line 98, and have shown that Σκηπτρώνος interpreted as "Scipiones" cannot unlock the secrets of this passage and must be discarded. A reexamination of the text before it was critically established has, therefore, become necessary.

A look at the *apparatus criticus* reveals that Σκηπτρώνος, the key word in this discussion as it stands in the text, is a conjecture by L. Sternbach, who read it with a capital *sigma* and understood it to mean "Scipiones."¹¹ But if the small letters of the codices VP are retained, a completely new interpretation of the passage becomes possible. It is true that the letter *tau* presents a problem, but it is a problem which also attends Sternbach's conjecture, and it may be dismissed as a scribal error, an orthographic mistake.¹² It will now be argued that the word Σκηπτρώνος may be interpreted as "scepters," and that this interpretation will relieve the passage of the difficulties noted in translating it "Scipiones."¹³

Since the scepter was one of the insignia of the Imperial dignity and the symbol of kingship, the law referred to in the passage admits of

¹¹ The codices, VP (Vatican and Paris), read σκηπτρώνος; see Pertusi, *Poemi*, 244.

¹² On the possibility of retaining the *tau* and the reading of the codices, σκηπτρώνος, see *infra*, Appendix A, which discusses C. H. Roberts' interpretation of the *crux*.

¹³ Σκηπτρών rather than σκηπτρον is used by the poet because the former term enables him to employ the figure of speech, which will be discussed presently. This form has many spellings, for which see Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968), 1609, 1611. An identical spelling with the one chosen by Pisides may be found in *De Ceremoniis*, Bonn ed. (1829), 62, line 16. Speaking of the form *scipio* and of its use in the tenth century, P. Grierson writes that "it had probably by then become a generic word for 'scepter' and no longer meant one of a particular design": *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, II, 1 (Washington, D.C., 1968), 88.

being interpreted as one which was intended to confer the kingship formally upon Heraclius. The use of the plural is justified, in view of the fact that both Heraclius and his son, Heraclius Novus Constantinus, ruled conjointly since 613, but metrical exigencies may also have played a part in the employment of the plural.¹⁴ The author, a poet, gave a rhetorical equivalent to the law, which undoubtedly had been couched in more prosaic terms than those of the poet. Instead of quoting it literally, the poet resorted to the use of metonymy by seizing upon the scepter, the *insigne* of kingship, and making it central in his presentation of the legislative act. In so doing, he followed his rhetorical propensity; he was also very clever, as metonymy provided him with a base for the further exploitation of rhetorical possibilities presented by this instance of metonymy.

In support of this interpretation, the following arguments may be brought forward.

There are other passages in the work of Pisides, also metonymic, which suggest that he had the kingship in mind as an honor to be conferred formally on Heraclius. One of these passages is preserved in Cedrenus,¹⁵ where the poet hopes that Heraclius, who had entered St. Sophia in black boots, would redden them with the blood of his enemies, possibly an implied reference to the red boots worn by kings. Another is the one that follows the passage on the law discussed in this article, and which may contain an implied reference to the red ink used by the emperors in signing documents (lines 107–9). The second one is more important than the first because of its proximity to the passage on the law of kingship, which it illuminates exegetically by suggesting another symbol of kingship, namely, red ink; furthermore, by its contrast of spurious red ink with the real red ink of wounds and military encounters, it could suggest that it was only then that the incumbent of the kingship was truly king and deserved to be formally so called, unlike his predecessors, such as Phocas, who used the red ink of kingship but were un-

worthy of the title because their achievements did not justify it. The same point applies equally well to the red boots made genuinely red by blood and not by red polish; but in this case the thought would have been expressed proleptically, since this is a reference to Heraclius in the year 622. All this chimes well with the poet's thoughts on the New Age,¹⁶ the Christian Basileia, which he had hoped would open under Heraclius and his son after the successful conclusion of the Persian War.

It has already been pointed out that Pisides' Alexander is Plutarch's, not Arrian's. In the *Vita*, Alexander's moral rather than military qualities are presented—those of the Basileus rather than those of the Strategos. Just as he was antiquity's foremost Strategos, so was he also its Basileus par excellence: the basis of this supreme Basileia is moral, and it places his Basileia on a level higher than his Strategia.¹⁷ In view of this, the Basileia more than the Strategia may have been in Pisides' mind when he made the *syncrisis* with Alexander. As has been noticed by Nissen, this *syncrisis* is not a superficial one, such as other rhetoricians were used to making, but it touches on fundamental issues: "selten wird dabei grundsätzliches so berührt wie bei Georgios."¹⁸ In addition to the two themes of Tyche and the Army (the latter of which Alexander inherited but which Heraclius had to fashion) expressed in the *syncrisis*, there is, of course, the obvious common feature of background which unites the two, namely, the smashing victory over Persia. But Alexander was king by the hereditary dynastic principle, and he succeeded in raising his Basileia to a higher level after Issus by proclaiming himself King of Asia, while Heraclius, who was the equal, nay, the superior of Alexander, had the Basileia only by the courtesy of popular usage and was not, *stricto sensu*, Basileus. It is difficult to believe that Pisides would not have thought of this obvious theme in a context of comparison between the two figures, especially in a *syncrisis* showing Heraclius the better of the two through *amplificatio*, the basis of which was the fact that Alexander inherited his army while Heraclius

¹⁴ The use of the plural could suggest that hereditary succession, which was on Heraclius' mind, might also have been involved. It is relevant to mention that the plural "scepters" is used by Heraclius himself in his Novella (*infra*, p. 231), and this could suggest that Pisides' use of the plural is not unnatural after all.

¹⁵ *Historiarum Compendium*, Bonn ed. (1838), I, 719.

¹⁶ On the New Age, see Shahīd, *op. cit.* (note 1 *supra*), 307–8; and *supra*, p. 228 note 10.

¹⁷ See Arrian, *Anabasis*, VII, 28–29; Plutarch, *Vita Alexandri*, Teubner (1968), II, 2, chaps. 7, 6–7; 9, 4; 21, 7–11.

¹⁸ See Nissen, *op. cit.* (note 6 *supra*), 304 note 2.

created one; this is an obvious parallel to the Basileia which Alexander inherited but which Heraclius did not. If Alexander added the Basileia of the Persian king after his victory, then Heraclius, his superior, could also, at least, assume the Basileia formally and constitutionally. The "law" referred to in the passage in Pisides clearly implies something important, not trivial, coming as it does in the middle of a *syncrisis* with Alexander, the king. The Basileia could be its natural explanation, since it was just about the only honor or title the ruler of the Byzantine state did not formally have. This may be supported by the longish passage which follows the one on the law and which speaks of Heraclius' wounds on the battlefield as justifying it; the metonymy involving the red ink of kings hints at the Basileia, and brings to mind Alexander's assumption of the title for the whole of Asia after the battle of Issus. The passage on the law, lines 97–101, is quite obscure and opaque; in and by itself it gives no hint what the "law" is about, at any rate before the metonymy in Σκηπρίωνος is recognized. But the following passage, although not crystal clear, is concrete enough in its details to help somewhat toward a breakthrough in the interpretation of the "law" of the preceding passage, to which, as has been implied, the *syncrisis* with Alexander's Basileia holds the key.

It speaks much for the architectonic skill of Pisides that he should have chosen this phase in the development of his argument to broach the topic of Heraclius' kingship; it is the most suitable context for its presentation in the wake of a *syncrisis* with the Basileus par excellence, not as an object of greed on the part of the autokrator but as a reward for his efforts on the battlefield, as an honor he earned and richly deserved. This is probably what is behind the startling switch from Alexander in the middle of the *syncrisis*. Such a switch is unintelligible except when it is realized that what is involved is something of the same order as the Basileia of Alexander, which keeps the passage homogeneous in content and, what is more, makes the *syncrisis* of the two figures more symmetrical, perhaps answering to a position taken by Alexander himself which might have survived in Pisides' thoughts after reading the *Life of Alexander*. According to Plutarch, Alexander was once asked whether he would like to take part in the footrace at the Olympic Games, to

which he answered that he would, but only if he could have kings as contestants.¹⁹

External evidence is also available: Heraclius was formally Basileus in 629, and it has been argued that it was in that very year that he *became* formally Basileus.²⁰ Now, George of Pisidia was not just another author of the reign of Heraclius; he was Heraclius' court poet who was advertising his monarch's virtues and achievements. Is it possible that he could have omitted a reference in his work to the formal assumption of the Basileia in a poem which was specifically about Heraclius' achievements, and, what is more, was composed shortly after the formal assumption of the kingship?²¹ It is also pertinent to remark that in the Novel²² of the year 629 it is the scepter more than anything else that is chosen by the emperor as the symbol of kingship. In the Prooimion of this Novel not the diadem but the purple and the scepter stand as symbols of the Basileia, and of the latter two it is the scepters which are privileged, described by the adjective αὐτεξούσια reflecting the plenitude of the king's power. This is the very same symbol used by George of Pisidia in his metonymic idiom to refer to the Basileia. The correspondences and intimate relations between the Basileia of 629 and its Novel on the one hand, and this passage in George of Pisidia on the other, are too striking to have been purely fortuitous. They suggest that the passage does speak of a law related to the assumption of the Basileia in the *inscriptio* of the Novel of March 629, and apparently it was deemed desirable or necessary to propose a law similar to such law passed in Old Rome as enabled Caesar to wear the royal costume and the laurel wreath.²³

¹⁹ See Plutarch, *Vita Alexandri*, chap. 4, 10.

²⁰ On this, see Shahîd, *op. cit.*, Appendix A, 317–18.

²¹ Pertusi dates it 630: *Poemi*, 16.

²² For the Novel, see *supra*, note 1.

²³ Why the law was proposed not by Heraclius himself but by others may be due to the extraordinary circumstances that attended this legislative act, which envisaged clinching Heraclius' assumption of the Basileia. He had indicated his desire to be formally Basileus by assuming that title in the *inscriptio* of the Novel of March 629. Since the contemplated legislative act concerned him personally and was related to a very sensitive area of the Roman constitution, it must have seemed much more appropriate and unembarrassing if it was proposed not by himself but by others; for related problems, see *infra*, p. 236.

For this interpretation to be convincing, it is necessary also to solve the difficulties with which the passage is attended and which, as has been shown, the "Scipionic" explanation fails to do.

The key to one of the difficulties is afforded by the realization that the poet, after resorting to metonymy—the use of scepter for kingship—resorted to another rhetorical device, namely, *paronomasia*. The poet had noticed that the word for scepter is a homophone of Scipio. This led him to indulge in his game of comparisons by including Scipio, and the accident of homophony served his purpose when set against the background of the Basileia conferred on Heraclius; what the poet is saying may be expressed as follows: "The days of Scipio's glory have come to an end, after he had lent his name to the symbol of kingship, the scepter; for a greater general has risen who can lend his name to the scepter." It is doubtful whether the "law" was expressed in such or similar terms, but it is the sort of verbal play that is not beneath a rhetorician. The word Σκηπτῶνας was too alluring to resist, as it enabled him to engage in two rhetorical figures simultaneously—metonymy and *paronomasia*, and former for advertising the honor conferred on Heraclius, the Basileia, the latter for the exercise of *amplificatio* at the expense of Scipio, already hinted at in line 97. Of the two figures, metonymy and *paronomasia*, the former is basic and functional, the one which can be related to the "law"; the latter is secondary and decorative, made possible by the accident of homophony, and cannot be related to the "law." Thus the reference to Scipio is merely incidental, answering to what has been said above on his irrelevance.

In addition to being consonant with the principle of *amplificatio*, this interpretation of Σκηπτῶνας as "scepters" reveals the natural sequence in the structure of the poem which had presented an unaccountable interruption, coming between lines 93–96, with their indirect reference to Alexander and the more explicit reference in lines 110–21. Now, the argument of the poem is not interrupted by a reference to Scipio; the passage is not on Scipio, but on the Basileia of Heraclius. The reference to Scipio is incidental and comes in the wake of the law on kingship only to enhance the rhetorical effect the poet was seeking.

That the poet could very well have indulged in such word-play is supported by the fact that

this instance of *paronomasia* is not isolated in his work. One of the particularly relevant instances occurs in the second canto of the *Heraclias*, where Pisides describes the second of the five achievements of Heraclius (lines 34–65), namely, how he quieted down the civil strife which broke out after he had disposed of Phocas. The relevant line is line 41, which describes Heraclius as the gentle physician who treated the disorder in the body politic gently and nursed it back to normality: ἱατρὸς ἐλαθῶν κυρίως γαληνίας, which Querci translates: *cum tu, medicus accedens, verus Galenus*.²⁴ The crucial word is γαλήν(ε)ια, "calm," "quietness," which is almost homophonous with the name of antiquity's famous physician, Galen, Γαληνός. The employment of the *tropos* in this passage is identical with that involving "Scipio," Σκηπτῶνας; there is first a hint at the *tropos* to come: Σκηπτῶν in *Heraclias* I, line 97, and ἱατρὸς in *Heraclias* II, line 41; then the *paronomasia* follows, represented by Σκηπτῶνας in *Heraclias* I, line 98, and by γαληνίας in *Heraclias* II, line 41; the elaboration of the concept upon which the *paronomasia* is based comes further, in *Heraclias* I, lines 95–109 for Σκηπτῶνας, and in *Heraclias* II, lines 42–61 for γαληνίας.

This instance of *paronomasia* is especially important for another reason, namely, the attitudes of various textual critics toward the crucial word in the line, Σκηπτῶνας. Querci, the first editor and translator of Pisides, does not tamper with the text, which according to the Vatican and Paris codices reads γαληνίας, and in this he is followed by Bekker, whose edition in the Bonn Corpus was reprinted in *Patrologia Graeca*, where Γαληνίας appears with a capital *gamma*.²⁵ However, Querci's Latin version, which accompanies Bekker's text in PG, reads: *cum tu, medicus accedens, verus Galenus*, where "Galenus" is not a literal translation of γαληνίας; but he hastens to inform the reader in his commentary why he effected this change in the translation: *allusio est ad nomen Galeni, medicī celeberrimi, quam in versione, detracto velo allegoriae, denuclavimus; si enim ad verbum reddantur voces ἱατρὸς κυρίως γαληνίας, vere tranquillitatis medicus, omnis sensus concinnitas perit, quae ex duplici vocis γαληνίας significatione oritur*. This is the ideal way of dealing with the thought of the poet; it does not tamper with the

²⁴ See PG, 92, col. 1320.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

text, and it brings out the implication of the crucial word in the translation. Most revealing and relevant to the argument of this section of the article is Sternbach's handling of the same word, γαληνίας, for which he conjectures Γαλήνιος. This changes the word from a common into a proper noun, and from an abstract into a concrete noun; it necessitates changing the *alpha* of the original text into an *omicron*, all of which is done in order to produce an adjectival form of Galen. Although something can be said for Γαλήνιος, it does not seem to justify tampering with the text. The conjecture does not register a better or richer meaning for the line; in fact, it may make it less subtle and attractive by obscuring the concept of "calmness," clearly expressed in γαληνίας, through the use of the adjectival form, capitalized as a proper noun, while γαληνίας clearly expresses the concept of calmness, the basic point in the mind of the poet. At the same time, as a *paronomasia*, it brings to mind Galen without any difficulty, since the poet has already prepared the reader for entertaining the *paronomasia* through ἰατρός in the same line; γαλήνιος with a small *gamma* might be the better solution.

The relevance of this parallel both in Pisides' work and in Sternbach's textual endeavor should by now be apparent. The passage on Heraclius, the gentle physician, is, as has been pointed out above, tripartite in structure, where the last part elaborates the *paronomasia* in the second part, just as the third part in the "Scipio" passage which deals with the "law" elaborates the *paronomasia* in the second part. This establishes an analogy between Σκηπίωνας and γαληνίας, based upon structural identity, and makes it fruitful to examine the clear one, Heraclius-Galen, for unlocking the secrets of the obscure one, Heraclius-Scipio, by realizing that the third part throws light on the second in the tripartite structure of the *tropos*. Basic for the working of the rhetorical device and the comprehension of the text is the retention of the reading of the manuscripts, γαληνίας with a small *gamma*, since emending it to Γαλήνιος with a capital one will completely obscure the *paronomasia* and paralyze the working of the rhetorical device. In the case of the *tropos* "Heraclius-Galen," the conjecture does not quite obscure the rhetorical figure since the third part in the structure of the rhetorical device is clear on the point (healing gently),

while the third part in "Heraclius-Scipio" is a law whose content is left out; so the obscuration of the *paronomasia* in Σκηπίωνας is serious, even disastrous. It is doubly disastrous because what is involved in the "Heraclius-Scipio" *tropos* is not purely and patently rhetorical, as in "Heraclius-Galen," but a legislative act which belongs to constitutional history, not to rhetorical gymnastics. Only a gentle doctoring of the reading of the manuscripts can keep the *paronomasia* alive.

The *syncrisis* with Alexander and the conclusions drawn therefrom throw light on another obscurity in the passage in Pisides, lines 99–100. It has been pointed out earlier (*supra*, p. 229) that one would have expected from a poet who had drawn on the *Parallel Lives* and chosen Alexander to find some reference to the Roman who was paired by Plutarch with Alexander, namely, Julius Caesar, not Scipio Africanus. This observation served its purpose to support the contention on the "irrelevance of Scipio." But it will also have drawn attention to Caesar whose presence in the passage is not attested explicitly, but is implied by the Alexander parallel. This enhances the possibility that what is involved in a passage which may be haunted by Caesar's ghost is the Basileia, since Caesar's involvement in it is the first and most outstanding example of a ruler in Roman history who desired the kingship; and what is more, the account is fully documented in Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, which Pisides undoubtedly read.

Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* can, therefore, be drawn upon to clarify the obscurity in lines 99–100: "Only now is it safe for subjects to legislate on behalf of their masters." Heraclius was praised for his gentleness by Pisides, as may be seen in the passage which evokes Galen, and he was praised for his gentleness toward his subjects in another source, Theodore Syncellus, who writes, τῇ πρὸς τοὺς ὑπηκόους πραότητι.²⁸ The poet could be relating this gentleness, the expected reaction of Heraclius, to the proposed law of his kingship and contrasting it with instances when the beneficiary of such or similar honors did not react likewise. An obvious historical situation comes to mind, one certainly relevant to the problem of the Basileia: the case of Julius Caesar at the Lupercalia. Displeased with the public rejection of his proposed king-

²⁸ See *Analecta Avarica*, ed. L. Sternbach (Cracow, 1900), 24, lines 21–22.

ship, Caesar deprived the two tribunes, Flavius and Maryllus, of their office and insulted the people by pejoratively calling them Brutes and Cymaeans.²⁷ The opening sentence in line 99, κοινὸν τὸ δόγμα, may also be drawn upon. The Roman people were not united on the question of Caesar's kingship; as a result, there followed the harsh measures of Caesar against the tribunes or even those of the tribunes against the people. This Roman background makes intelligible what Pisides says about Heraclius, namely, that there is general agreement²⁸ that Heraclius should be king, and so it is safe to introduce laws without fear of being punished. Heraclius was worthy of the honor, voted him by a grateful people and justified by his record on the battlefield, while Caesar coveted it and desired it against the wishes of the people. So Heraclius is better than Caesar who was denied it, and better than Alexander who inherited it.

It is especially regrettable that the *syncrisis* with which Plutarch concludes his account of each pair of his *Parallel Lives* has not survived for Alexander and Caesar; it would have been particularly helpful for a definitive solution of the problem posed in this article, as it might have included some value judgments on Caesar's worthiness or unworthiness for the Basileia he coveted, or some such judgment as to be found in Plutarch's *syncriseis* on other pairs that have survived. The loss of this one is much more regrettable than that of the *Life of Scipio* since, as has been shown, Scipio has no central place in Pisides' thought. However, the survival of the two *Lives* of Alexander and Caesar is good enough, especially the latter. The difficulties in *Heraclias* lines 97–101 and the passage that follows, lines 102–7, become intelligible when read against the background of Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*. This *Life* can answer some questions which may be raised legitimately about these two passages and about the interpretation presented in this article: 1. one bears on Caesar; 2. another bears on Scipio; 3. and a third bears on the obscurity itself which attends this passage; was it studied?

²⁷ See Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, Teubner (1968), II, 2, chap. 61.

²⁸ On the possibility that κοινόν may not mean "general" in the sense of unanimous, and that the "joint resolution" was passed by two out of three possible bodies, see *infra*, p. 236.

1. If, as has been argued, Caesar is more important to Pisides than Scipio, why does he not appear more prominently or explicitly in the very same passage which mentions Scipio by name and only implies Caesar?

Pisides has an understandably ambivalent attitude toward Caesar, as may be inferred from a careful analysis of the passage. On the one hand, he has to burn incense to the rhetorical demands of *amplificatio*, which entails showing Caesar inferior to Heraclius; this inferiority is indeed implied, as has been argued above. On the other hand, Pisides could not very well belittle the great Roman, whose nephew was Octavian and whose family name, "Caesar," as well as Octavian's honorary cognomen, "Augustus," formed part of the imperial titlature which Heraclius bore.

The way out of this dilemma was the obvious one—the omission of Caesar's name explicitly, and, at the same time, without mentioning names, the employment of *amplificatio* to imply the superiority of Heraclius, now that this superiority sounds harmless and implies no disrespect to the name of Caesar. For Pisides, this superiority is supported by the fact that Heraclius, although in the line of Emperors since Caesar, was opening a new era in the history of Rome, that of the Basileia, and, what is more, the Christian Basileia. A Christian poet such as Pisides must have been convinced of the validity of this *amplificatio*, for to him a Christian ruler such as Heraclius was undoubtedly superior to a pagan one, even though he was Julius Caesar himself. One of the significant passages in *Expositio Persica*, II, can illustrate this point;²⁹ in lines 24–26 the poet extolls the μοναρχία of Heraclius; although the term occurs in a military context, its political implications are clear enough. It is not the bare secular concept but the Christian one:

ὥς εὖ κρατοῦσα σὺν Θεῷ μοναρχία
οὐ γὰρ πολυπρόσωπος ἦν ἀναρχία,
ἀλλὰ πρατοῦσα σὺν Θεῷ μοναρχία.

This immediately invites comparison with the μοναρχία Caesar wanted and received, much to the dislike of the Roman people, since in fact it was a τυραννίς, as noted by Plutarch.³⁰

2. Although much has been said on Scipio in this article, there is room for one last reflection called for by the thoughts expressed in the

²⁹ See Pertusi, *Poemi*, 97.

³⁰ See his *Life of Caesar*, chap. 57.1.

preceding paragraph. Pisides' ambivalent attitude to Caesar and his reluctance to include him explicitly in the *amplificatio* could explain why he brought in Scipio as an unembarrassing substitute for Caesar; and a good substitute he was, since he was Rome's greatest general in Republican times. With Scipio, the series of *amplificationes* embrace a Roman military figure and not only Greek ones, and can also answer the apostrophe to Rome which opens the second canto of the *Heraclias*. Thus, it makes Heraclius' superiority complete over both Greeks and Romans.

It is also possible that the *paronomasia* involved in Scipio's name is not merely rhetorical. Just as Scipio saved Pisides the embarrassment of an *amplificatio* at the expense of Caesar, so did the homophone, *scipio*, enable the poet to refer discreetly to a concept, an explicit reference to which might have evoked from the Caesarian past inauspicious precedents and constitutional memories incongruous with the poet's hopes for the smooth passage of the legislative act he was so enthusiastic about.

3. The last question which arises is the reason for the implied reference to all this in the language of Pisides. It may be suggested that even as late as the seventh century, there was something embarrassing about the formal conferment of the Basileia on the Roman Autokrator after so many centuries of resistance to the institution and pride in having done so. The poet speaks of κοινὸν τὸ δόγμα, but this is no guarantee that the resolution did not meet with opposition from some quarters; indeed, his calling upon the emperor to validate it might suggest that there was such opposition, of which the emperor, who had not validated it yet, was aware. Of the three bodies—the Senate, the army (the guard), and the people—it was possibly the second and the third that were likely to have passed this resolution.³¹ The poet does refer to resolutions passed by the Polis in favor of his hero, as in *Heraclias* II, lines 62–65; furthermore, the poet speaks of those who introduced the “law” as δούλοις, and this could perhaps apply more to the people and the guard than to the senators.

As for the opposition, this might have come from the Senate—the institution which was the symbol of the Republic and which had been

reduced to impotence by Caesar's *monarchia*; as a political body it had stood for the very antithesis of the Basileia coveted by Caesar and denied him by the Roman people. The formal conversion of the Autokratoria into a Basileia could very well have aroused some opposition among the senators, some of whom belonged to the old Roman aristocracy. Such an attitude on the part of the Senate would have been consonant with what is known about the revival of its power in the seventh century. Throughout the reign of Heraclius it played a particularly active part; it appealed to Heraclius the Elder to put an end to Phocas' tyranny; it persuaded Heraclius to become emperor after the success of the coup d'état; it corresponded with Chosroes in 615 and received regular letters from Heraclius on the progress of his campaigns against the Persians and their successful conclusion in 628; after his death it deposed Martina and Heraclonas and conferred sovereignty upon Constantine III. It is, therefore, the Senate that possibly opposed the conferment of the Basileia on an Autokrator who owed his position to its intervention and persuasion.³²

This, then, could have been the situation referred to by Pisides; a resolution was passed, possibly by an assembly of the people, in the Hippodrome and also by the guard, but the Senate may not have been favorable to the final enactment of this resolution into a law for which the emperor's seal was necessary. The poet calls on him to validate the “law” with his *typos*. In so doing, the poet is ranging himself against the Senate, but this is consonant with the passage quoted above (p. 234), in which *monarchia* is contrasted favorably with *anarchia*; the latter is described as πολυπρόσωπος, which in spite of the military context wherein it appears may be an oblique reference to the Senate.

Perhaps the foregoing arguments on various levels have clarified, or at least made less obscure, this difficult passage in the *Heraclias* by showing that what is really involved in the *crux* is not Scipio Africanus but *scipio eburneus*, pointing to a legislative act of the first importance, related to the formal assumption of the Basileia in 629 by the victorious Autokrator.

³¹ Twenty years before, in 610, these three bodies had acclaimed him emperor after his victory over Phocas.

³² On certain areas where the Senate remained constitutionally important in the Byzantine period, see J. B. Bury, “The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire,” in *Selected Essays of J. B. Bury*, ed. H. Temperley (Cambridge, 1930), 101–3.

APPENDIX A

C. H. Roberts has suggested to me that the reading σκηπιῶντος could possibly be correct as a participle formed from the verb σκηπιάω, "to carry the scepter." His suggestion has obvious merits: 1. it retains the reading of the codices VP; and 2. the controversial verse, line 98, would be intelligible, meaning "all future-rulers would be known as Heracliuses." This interpretation encounters the following difficulties:

1. The verb σκηπιάω is not attested, but Pisides could have coined it (if he did, the meaning is likely to be "to carry the scepter" rather than "be a Scipio, i.e., member of an illustrious family," as in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* [Oxford, 1968], p. 1238). 2. The imperative in the preceding verse involving Scipio is strikingly emphatic, and so should dominate the interpretation of line 98. But σκηπιῶντος, in the sense of "those who carry the scepter," does not do full justice to the imperative and the emphasis given to Scipio in line 97, although a faint echo of it is retained. The interpretation that rests on it merely suggests that the future rulers be called Heracliuses. But according to this interpretation Scipio is not slighted, as he is supposed to be in line 97 and as he would be if the scepter that carried his name would no longer continue to do so—the interpretation presented in this article. The two verses in lines 97–98 are very closely connected, and this connection is loosened by the reading σκηπιῶντος. 3. More important is the difficulty of relating this interpretation to the right context to which it belongs, namely, the imperial titlature. If the Byzantine emperors had had among their titles "Scipio," then this interpretation would have made excellent sense and would have done justice to the imperative in line 97. But "Augustus" and "Caesar," not "Scipio," appear in the titlature, and consequently Scipio could not have been embarrassed by the proposed law, as he is supposed to be in line 97.

In spite of these difficulties, the reading σκηπιῶντος in the sense suggested by C. H. Roberts has to be taken into account in any discussion of this *crux*.

APPENDIX B

When I had occasion to give a talk on the *crux* in Pisides at the Dumbarton Oaks Center

for Byzantine Studies, Dr. Nicolas Oikonomides, visiting professor at the Center, suggested an interpretation which deserves a hearing, especially as he supported it with some pertinent observations.

According to this interpretation, what is involving in the *crux* is a rhetorical *antonomasia*, and the controversial verse could be translated "the Scipios, i.e., the great generals, should be called the Heracliuses." Attractive as it is, this interpretation is open to the following objections. 1. It makes the name of the emperor Ἡρακλείων, while it is established as Ἡράκλειος. It is difficult to believe that such a skilled versifier as Pisides would, for the articulation of this simple thought, have resorted to tampering with the very name of the emperor, changing it from one form to another, especially as this would have opened the possibility of confusion with the name of one of his sons, the diminutively called Heraclionas, and with the patronymic of Heraclius, for which see *supra*, note 4. 2. Even on the basic morphological level, the new form for the name of the emperor, like the real one a substantivized adjective but formed with the suffix -ών, cannot be accepted. This is not a recognized suffix for forming adjectives. Ἀργείωνας for Ἀργείους seems the only attested instance, and it comes from Hesychius. 3. In spite of the fame of Scipio and its survival into the sixth century (see *supra*, p. 228), it was Caesar who was considered the foremost Roman general, while in the motifs of Byzantine literature Scipio represents fear of God (see H. Hunger, in *DOP*, 23–24 [1969–70], 28); if the *crux* had involved an *antonomasia*, Caesar rather than Scipio would have served the purpose better. 4. These objections notwithstanding, this interpretation of the *crux* could be entertained if the context in which it occurs was merely rhetorical. But the Pisides passage includes a clear reference to a law, and it is difficult to conceive how the controversial verse, interpreted in *antonomastic* terms, could have been the law in question. For the law to make sense, something different and more concrete than a rhetorical figure would be expected.

A satisfactory interpretation must answer all the questions that a careful examination of the passage will raise. I have suggested that the key to the solution of the *crux* lies in the realization that the word Ἡρακλείωνας is the plural of Ἡρακλείων, which Pisides coined on the analogy of Σκηπίων, "scepter," and endowed with the

same signification. This interpretation encounters no difficulties on the morphological level, succeeds in slighting Scipio, makes intelligible the sentence beginning with νῦν ἀκινδύνως μόνον, presents a proposal worthy of a legislative act, and admits of being related to the immediate

historical background that witnessed the change in the imperial titulature to Πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ Βασιλεὺς.

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